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BELMAS Leadership Preparation and Development (LPD) Research Interest Group (RIG)

This summary explains the Leadership Preparation and Development RIG: what its aims are; how to get involved; what the benefits are of participation; and then gives a viewpoint from a RIG attendee. As we all know, education policy is a fast-moving area. Consequently, Research Interest Groups are established when a group of academic colleagues team up with a group of practitioners to discuss and research the changes that are happening in a particular area. The BELMAS Leadership, Preparation and Development Research Interest Group is open to all those who have an interest in researching leadership development in its broadest sense, including educational leaders, researchers and research students. Its aim is to build a forum and network capable of generating and facilitating exchange and partnership on a continuing basis across the full range of research interests, professional contexts and contemporary issues relating to leadership development, and the ways in which we prepare leaders in education for their roles.

The group might appeal to colleagues researching the changes in leadership preparation and development. This could include colleagues researching social policy, Initial Teacher Education, postgraduate education, those involved in CPD, those involved with recent NCTL developments, and so on.

Benefits from participation will include:

- Membership of a community of researchers engaged in advancing the understanding of leadership development
- The opportunity to collaborate or correspond with colleagues engaged in similar studies, research or activity
- The opportunity to identify and explore contemporary issues linked to leadership development
- Participation in future events specifically covering issues related to leadership development

Networking and further information on this RIG's activities will take place in the members' area of the BELMAS website. Membership is free for the first year. We are keen to hear from members of BELMAS who are interested in leadership preparation and development.

Overview of sessions held:

This new RIG was launched back in 2015, with a keynote talk by Professor Tony Bush. We enjoyed Tony's talk that provided food for thought on the areas for development inside this RIG. We then progressed by holding an event, in November 2015, where we presented short abstracts from our research in this area and discuss where we wanted to go next. This enabled us to discuss as a group how we choose to collectively go forward with our Research Interest Group, and whether or not we want to consider some publications from our research in this area.

Although, as Tony's launch talk mentioned, much of this focus is at present school based, as a RIG we are also interested to hear from other angles on LPD. From our May 2016 session we decided to focus on the different levels of LPD: micro, meso, macro and international. We then returned to our international theme with a talk by Tony Bush in October 2016 on Principal leadership development. We then returned to our micro theme of internal school LPD cultures in March 2017, with a talk by Paul Irvine, on middle leadership preparation. At all of these sessions a wide range of interested people get together to share thoughts, insights and research.

Next session:

Our next session is planned for November 9th 2017, where we will be having a Roundtable event, with some of the leading figures in Leadership Preparation and Development: Andrew Warren (Chair of the Teaching Schools Council); Professor Tony Bush (CRELM); Ian Dewes (NLE and a Primary Head; Sue Robinson (MAT Chief Exec); Claire Smith (MAT CPD Lead); have all agreed to be on our panel and will be taking a wide range of questions about how the system of school to school support (S2SS) is currently working for the preparation and development of our education system leaders.

View from a RIG attendee (Dr Val Poultney):

I have very much welcomed the opportunity to be involved in this RIG which has helped me to develop my understanding of leadership preparation from a range of different perspectives and contexts. The range of presentations, discussions and debates to date have given me space to be able to consider how leadership development contributes to my own research into school improvement through teacher inquiry and the ways in which I need to understand how vital it is to develop authentic school leaders who are prepared to continue their own professional learning in order to be able to meet the needs of their students and staff. Over the last two decades the reshaping of school structures and networks between schools (Academies, Trusts, MATs) has become much more complex and keeping abreast of the many changes to all phases of education will continue to be a challenge. The work of this RIG then is very timely so that both academics and practitioners can begin to understand in more detail how to prepare leaders for the fast pace of work they will encounter as they move into these key positions in schools, whether that be at middle, senior or executive level. The accountability 'bar' for school leaders through standardized policies and practices such as learning targets and reliance on metrics has been steadily rising and resulting in real work intensification for these leaders; so how are they best prepared and developed for the role?

We also recognize through research that school leaders do make a significant difference to the outcomes of students and the professional staff they lead. Without adequate preparation and continuing professional development for leadership we may see attrition rates, especially at headship level, continuing to rise. The lines between leadership, preparation and development are becoming less clear and we need to understand why this is the case and then how best to prepare and develop the leaders of the future. The work of this RIG gives us the opportunity to research into the many facets of these burgeoning issues and I have welcomed the opportunity to share, learn and to contribute to our collective understanding of this very important aspect of leadership.

Current Research:

We are currently working on a Special Edition of *Management in Education* to be published in Spring 2018, on Leadership Preparation and Development.

If you would like to come along to any events, and see what we do, please register on our Leadership Preparation and Development RIG page on the BELMAS website, or contact D.Outhwaite@warwick.ac.uk, we look forward to you joining us.